DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 214 CS 200 698

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TITLE	The Impact of External Examinations on the Teaching of English, Study Group Paper No. 9; and Plenary Session.
INSTITUTION	Modern Language Association of America, New York, N.Y.; National Association for the Teaching of English (England).; National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Ill.
PUB DATE	Sep 66
NOTE	28p.; Working papers of the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching and Learning of English (Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, Aug. 20-Sept. 16, 1966); For related documents see CS200684-697 and CS200699-200700
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*College Entrance Examinations; Conference Reports; *English Instruction; Group Tests, Language; Literature; *Standardized Tests; Testing; *Test Reviews; *Tests
IDENTIFIERS	*Dartmouth Seminar on the Teaching of English

ABSTRACT

External testing (public tests) is examined from a British point of view by George Cameron Allen and then responded to by an American. Allen discusses the history of external examinations in Britain, paying particular attention to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) examinations and the dichotomy that exists between language and literature portions of the test. Most students who are college bound are "done with English" at the age of sixteen; only those who specialize in English go on to higher level English tests focusing on literature, at the university level. In response to this traditional form of testing, the British reexamined their test forms, which resulted in an alternate-choice test, the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE), which pays particular attention to the individual student, more closely relates language and literature, and provides an oral examination which the GCE ignored. The American paper responds by commenting on the College Entrance Examination Boards, noting the attention paid to vocabulary and multiple-choice items. Advantages and disadvantages of the Advance Placement English and the Graduate Record Examination in English are considered. The author concludes by suggesting that a profile of the student's writing may tell a great deal more than a straight examination. (HOD)

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ED 082214

STUDY GROUP PAPER NO. 9

The Impact of External Examinations on the Teaching of English

by

George Cameron Allen

Half ignorant they turned an easy wheel
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel

The aim of this paper is to voice and nourish discussion; it expresses a personal point of view and looks mainly to U.K. experience and examples. This limitation reflects partly the writer's nationality; few of us are sufficiently at home with both educational systems to span the gap. But it also reflects his conviction that the comparative examinologist can hardly do anything else. If, for example, one studies a sequence of recent English and American publications about the teaching of English, it is at once evident that in the former there are innumerable references to every aspect of examinations, whereas in the latter such references are much fewer; let the index of almost any publication that may be chosen speak for itself. In this matter Britain appears to have won a horrid pre-eminence. Until very recently indeed the teaching of English at almost every level after the infant school has seemed to lie under something very like a spell. "Repeatedly one is told there is little point in educational innovation

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of this, that or the other kind--let alone action research--until something is done to free teachers from the dictates of public examinations."* These examinations often reduce to very little the nominal freedom of each United Kingdom school to choose its own curriculum.

In Britain the external examination has a long history; it was introduced first in a modern form at Oxford in 1800, and then, during the 1850's, to the civil service and armed forces; here was the end of privilege, the dawn of a fairer, more scientific age. So it was extended in 1862 to the elementary school child. From then until 1890 failure on his part to reach prescribed standards in reading, writing, and arithmetic each year meant that the school lost part of its grant--and the master lost part of his salary. The results were appalling; standards may have been low, but this was not the way to raise them. Matthew Arnold, H.M.I., protested fiercely and often, as in 1869: this "must inevitably concentrate the teachers' attention on the means for producing the minimum (standard) and not simply on the instruction of his school. . . . The safeguard seems to be in reducing the overwhelming preponderance of the examination and its results." It was exactly one hundred years later, in 1962, that most English and Welsh universities, alarmed at the poor English of their students, decided to cure the symptoms by imposing yet another external examination, this time in what they called Use of English.

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* P.44 Innovation and Research in Education, by Michael Young. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.

Inbetween, the examination system had been developing into a major industry. There was the "scholarship," later generally known as the "11+ exam.," for admission to grammar school. There were School (1917) and Higher Certificate Examinations, and their successors (introduced 1950-1952), the General Certificate of Education examinations at Ordinary level (taken about age sixteen) and Advanced level (about eighteen). A large literature was built up about all these; but this and such research as existed dealt mainly with the elaboration of more sophisticated modes of testing; the principle was seldom questioned, and in the educational world the Examination Boards loomed large--like automobile corporations in the U.S. Yet in spite of their turnover and university backing, none was ever in a position to sponsor curriculum studies as the American College Board did.

It is only fair to add that many of the difficulties were caused or aggravated by factors outside the examination itself and not within the control of examiners. Three at least of these factors must be mentioned. First and worst were the shortages. A pass at eleven years admitted to the grammar school, and sufficiently high marks in G.C.E. would admit to the university; but there have never been enough places in either to satisfy demand. The grammar schools could only take a little under 20 percent of the school population, so the great majority of those who took the "11+" failed, and the failure line had to be drawn at a point where the applicants were thickly bunched. On the result of a single day, a single examination, a single question, such as an English essay, might depend your whole future and whether you

became an office worker, a technician, or an artisan. Secondary school provision is much better than it was and selection procedures have improved; already primary school work is much less disturbed than formerly by examination pressures from the secondary school, and the situation at this end promises for several reasons to go on improving. But there are still too few university places, and it is small wonder that parents, teachers, and the pupils competing for university places all attach a quite unnatural importance to high marks at A level; who wouldn't? A second main factor may be found in the traditional organization of the secondary school curriculum; "O" level opens the door to a relatively specialised curriculum, so in effect many candidates are trying to pass the examination in English in order to put as much English as possible behind them (notwithstanding the "Use of English" test imposed by universities). "I've done English" means that at sixteen (or sometimes even fifteen) you need do little more, while those who go on with it as specialists once again work under the shadow of an elaborate examination at "A" level; the effect is cumulative. The third main factor is that English is often taught in very large classes by many who are not equipped to teach the subject; one result of a situation so closely parallel to that described in American terms in "The National Interest and the Teaching of English" (NCTE, 1960) is that teachers cling to the examination syllabus because it provides an incentive which would never on any other terms attach to the dreary exercises which have traditionally provided the easiest kind of English teaching.

And now to study one examination itself more closely. G.C.E. "O" level must do duty for the rest and is the most important because it is taken by most candidates, including all who go on to the universities or into colleges of education. In the summer of 1963 the "O" level English language examination was taken by 348,946 candidates out of exactly half a million who entered for the examination in any subject. 186,689, or 53.5 percent passed, and nearly half had to face failure. Until very recently, the papers followed a stereotyped pattern which could be anticipated; the whole class would be drilled and drilled with the help of textbooks designed to "get them through." Some papers still follow the stereotype in most essentials. The average paper would begin with one or perhaps two composition questions involving continuous writing; one still finds many dull subjects, and the belles lettres tradition of essay writing is not quite extinct, but at least the tradition of continuous writing never died out. Then there were comprehension exercises of varying quality, often concentrating upon insignificant points and including an exercise in precis, a game in which success might depend at least as much on knowing the tradition as on really getting to the heart of the matter; often the candidate just had to boil 300 unimportant words down to 100. Then came the odds and ends, which examiners clung to, perhaps because only here could one be certain of being able to say right or wrong: about the meaning of D.D., R.I.P. and V.I.P. there could be little ambiguity, even after Empson. In a questionnaire sent out in 1962 to a representative sample

of schools taking 'O' level almost one school in three (30.4 percent) found its teaching hampered by all the questions other than composition or comprehension.

There has been no oral examination in G.C.E., which was perhaps as well considering the form which any oral test might have taken. Literature did not come into the language paper; it was reserved for the literature paper, which was taken by a mere 174,969 in 1963, of whom 101,827, or 58 percent, passed. This enabled many schools to teach literature without having to worry about the exam but had the effect of dividing what should be a single subject into two. Eng. lit. (as opposed to Eng. lang.) had to steer between the Scylla of set books and the Charybdis of no set books; the examiners usually chose the former, preferring hard facts to waffle, but the result often went little beyond a test of memory and what Frank Whitehead calls "Ficts"* (i.e., "Fiction treated over-literally")

> . . .with clov'n heel
> From the glad sound would not be absent long.

"Give the substance of" is of course common, but, where opinion is invited, how far is it likely to be the candidate's own? To take a gem from a question actually set in 1965 and quoted in "Examining English":

> There are beautiful and sensitive pictorial and musical qualities in Tennyson's best narrative poetry." Say how far this statement is true of "Morte d'Arthur.

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*P. 245, 246 The Disappearing Dais, by Frank Whitehead, Chatto & Windus, 1966.

One cannot give the context of "O" level without at least a brief reference to "A" level. This was taken by far fewer candidates, 28,134 in 1963, of whom 19,973, or 71 percent, passed. These were all specialists and the questions were mainly on set books, but the papers set by certain boards have sometimes been most interesting and often searching, and some have an interesting "unseen" element about them. Perhaps the most surprising omission at Advanced level until now has been any reference to language, which in the traditional school curriculum ends abruptly at the age of sixteen, just when the really interesting possibilities of language study are beginning to suggest themselves.

The reader who wishes to learn more about "the examining of English language" should read the report with this title published by H. M. Stationery Office in 1964 and the new (1966) NATE publications on "Examining English"; the former stopped just short of recommending that the 'O' level "Eng. lang." examination should be abolished but had much to say and recommended many changes. Since 1964 there has been a marked improvement. Experiment is in the air; individual questions have been greatly improved, and more changes are clearly coming. But the teaching pattern in our schools continues to be largely dominated by these powerful tests, and perhaps English has suffered more than most subjects.

Of course, if one strikes a balance, there is much to be said for as well as against. Though the 1964 report expressed misgivings about

the standard of moderation, the examining boards have always striven within ~~their~~ terms of reference ~~to be~~ just and helpful; immense pains are taken with the papers, and the examiners are more concerned to help the candidate to do justice to his powers than is often realised. The examination has, as we have seen, helped to safeguard the place of written composition; it has encouraged teachers to insist that their pupils should at least try to work out an argument step by step; in literature it is good to have at times to hold the whole of a play or poem in the mind at once. It is true too that good teaching has never had to lie down under the testing, and many able candidates have taken the examination in their stride.

But how much there is to be said against it all: the dichotomy of "Lang." and "Lit." running like the Berlin wall clean across what should be a single subject, the lack of an oral test, the traditional papers each duller than the last, the dress rehearsals at school (on which much may hang) and indeed many of the school's own internal examinations over a long period (since their pattern tends to follow the external lead), the cram textbooks, the general sense of strain, the effort to write an acceptable piece of prose about nothing in particular or to memorise and apply traditional grammatical terms which grammarians have long since discarded or to guess what sort of paper it will be in literature, the secondhand opionion--all these may not so much influence the teaching as make a bid to take over the entire English syllabus. The examiners' natural tendancy to regard a candidate's use of language

as "correct" or "incorrect" has diverted attention from the more difficult and important task of writing what is appropriate in its context, so as to communicate with the listener or reader clearly and with courtesy. And the present ritual conflicts violently with all that current thinking about English teaching is beginning to find out about the importance of language for the whole of any human being's natural development, the pre-eminent place of speech at all ages, the central importance of literature and the part which it can play to help a boy or girl to understand the world around him, its relation to language, the role of "personal writing," the way in which English can affect the learner's attitudes and through these his values generally. It has been tragic that until two or three years ago the whole sorry situation was taken for granted as something which could not be altered; the examining boards disclaimed responsibility for considering the effect of testing upon teaching, and nobody else tried to do anything about it with the single and honourable exceptions of a few small groups of teachers and Denys Thomson's periodical "The Use of English" (after which by a monstrous irony the universities "18+" test has been named). Most tragic of all was the way in which so many teachers resisted change whenever a proposal for change came up before one of the boards; those who feel insure hug their chairs.

Though little proof can be given, this analysis of U.K. experience suggests that our examination case-history goes deeper than is often realised; it would not help to attack merely the symptoms without first considering the complex socio-educational conditions which in part

cause and certainly exacerbate their effect. It is for this reason that recent developments (over the past two or three years) in the U.K. are so encouraging. An attack, still in its earliest stage, is beginning to be made all along the line. Not that everything can be rapidly put right; the shortage of university places will be with us for a long time yet, and inadequacy of school design as well as shortages of school provision will also persist; so will lack of adequately trained teachers of English. Yet already there are signs of something like a revolution in initial training: new ideas about learning processes in relation to child development are beginning to work upwards from the primary school to the secondary, the Department of Education and Science and local authorities alike are beginning to show in practice that they appreciate the extent of their responsibility for the quality of education which schools offer, and the Schools Council for the Curriculums and Examinations, formed in 1964, is already committed to research and development work on an altogether new scale. There are signs that the importance of in-service training is coming to be appreciated, so that teachers will regard their initial training as only a first instalment.

It is against this general background that what is happening in English and in examinations should be seen. English forms one of the three initial forms of study of the Schools Council, and already an English programme (which will take account of U.S. "Project English") is being launched. Within the examination field itself the most important single development has been the setting up of the Examination

for the Certificate of Secondary Education--C.S.E. for short; the first examinations were held in 1965. This examination is aimed at candidates with the second quartile of ability, though it attracts both abler and many less able candidates. It is taken at sixteen like "O" level G.C.E. (but unlike G.C.E. may not be taken by younger candidates), and a Grade 1 pass in C.S.E. is accepted as equivalent to an "O" level pass.

This examination has many interesting features. The various boards, at least for a long time to come, will be operating on a smaller scale than G.C.E., thus avoiding many of the problems which come with bigness. The individual school may work out its own examination, subject to external moderation; the introduction of a graded mark means that candidates need not be failed on the scale that has characterised G.C.E., while the very existence of the examination should mean that fewer candidates with but little hope of passing "O" level will be entered faute de mieux. Practising teachers are associated with the C. S.E. examination at every stage, and indeed have effective control of policy to a degree which has not been characteristic of G.C.E. Meanwhile the long-term implications for G.C.E. of C.S.E. are being carefully studied. From the very outset of C.S.E., research and dissemination have been encouraged to a degree without precedent in England and Wales. Already a sequence of something like a dozen bulletins, each dealing with a specific examination, topic and problem, have for the first time enabled the individual school to keep in touch with what is happening.

In English the C.S.E. has introduced several promising developments. Literature and language are more closely related, and in literature, instead of the examinations having to choose between set books and vague generalities, wide reading can now often be encouraged side by side with more intense reading. For the first time oral testing is an essential element of the examination in English; a major effort is being made to involve the candidate's interest so that he may speak and write about what interests him; course work, within varying limits, is being taken into account. Much research is in process or about to begin in connection with various aspects of examining such as oral testing (including the understanding of the spoken word), and a remarkable study has already been made of the possibilities of multiple marking* (in which continuous written composition is marked by three or four examiners, each judging mainly by sight impression, and the results are then averaged), which should make it easier to offer candidates subjects which are really likely to interest and involve them. Under the Schools Council English Programme it is hoped to provide several major centres concerned with research and development over a long period, as well as a much greater number of local centres concentrating upon in-service training; these should over a period be able to give valuable help in connection with examinations, though their main concern will always

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*"Multiple Marking of English Compositions," by J. N. Britton, N.C. Martin, and H. Rosen. Schools Council Examinations Bulletin No. 12, H.M.S.O., 1966.

be not with examining but with the ways in which children develop a command of language and a pride in usingit well.*

All this is new and exciting. It is still too early to make more than modest claims for work much of which is in its infancy, and much remains to be undertaken; in examining, as in teaching, there remains a danger that the English aspect may be too subject-centred; the problem of providing better books (not necessarily "text books") and teaching materials remains acute. Within the schools themselves traditional practices and attitudes die hard, and there are very real hesitations particularly among more conservative teachers about the implications of such new developments as C.S.E., so that many, for example, are afraid to exchange an external for a largely internal examination under Mode 3; admittedly the new ideas make heavy demands upon the staffs of those schools which are prepared to face them. But when all is said and done, what has suddenly begun to happen after one hundred very barren years at least amounts to a good beginning.

It is at this point that a comparison with the current U.S. scene should be instructive. In American as in British schools there is, of course, a good deal of testing, but with one or two significant

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* "The Examining of English Language" (1964), "Criteria of Success" (1965), Frank Whitehead's The Disappearing Dais (1966), and "Examining English" (1966) have already been mentioned; in addition the reader may like to know "The Excitement of Writing" Chatto and Windus, 1964, which gives a vivid picture of what good writing really is, how it can be encouraged, and how it can be affected by traditional examinations, with some ludicrous but rather frightening examples of actual questions. The two N.A.T.E. publications ("Criteria of Success" and "Examining English") give particularly effective studies in detail of recent developments in C.S.E. and G.C.E. respectively, and should between them illustrate the complexity of the problem as well as the ways in which improvement is gradually coming.

exceptions the tests are not external. In U.S. schools, though tests are many, external examinations are few and schools do not seem as preoccupied as British schools with testing. Yet U.S. education is also concerned about teaching which is less good than it should be and standards of attainment which are low; this alone should confirm (what was never in doubt) that external examinations are not the sole source of trouble, though they may aggravate trouble from other sources. It is worth noting that current teacher opinion in the U.S. is in the main concentrating upon all that makes for better teaching rather than upon this or that aspect of testing. There is, however, one point at which existing American tests do seem to bear significantly upon the pattern of teaching in English; multiple-choice tests have to some extent supplanted the essay-type examination in English as in many other subjects, partly because they are easier to mark and partly because in the past the marking of essays has tended to be notoriously unreliable. Searching as these tests can be, they do seem over a period of time to have been at least partly responsible for what to an Englishman so often seems the curiously disappointing quality of English writing in school--not that he is in a position to criticise, but impressions persist! In particular there seems some prima facie evidence which suggests that the tests of the College Entrance Examination Board (which govern admission to many of the most desirable universities and seem the nearest U.S. equivalent to a British external examination), have affected the esteem in which continuous writing is held in the schools; it is significant that the essay has been at least partially reinstated.

In such a situation there seems infinite scope for exchange. The only question might be how far we should go. It is, for example, conceivable that if Mode 3 of C.S.E. were to attract an ever increasing number of schools and candidates, with an increasing emphasis upon course work, the result in a decade or two might fall not so far short of becoming an English version of the U.S. credit system; conversely, one already hears disquieting rumours of a large scale development of Federal testing which, even on a sample basis, might only too easily come to affect the teaching of English in school; if the testing is not intended to influence teaching, then what is its purpose? Perhaps such extreme developments will never come to pass; probably most British opinion would hesitate to jettison the examination in favour of what to us would be an untried credit system, just when we might conceivably hope to begin learning how to harness our examinations in the service of an improved curriculum. It may be better to live with traditional institutions which, however imperfect, we at least understand.

Yet, short of such hazardous extremes, how much we have to give each other. On both sides of the ocean we need better arrangements for diffusing the results of recent or current research and experiment. And there should be infinite scope for the joint planning of some experiments which should help us both, though it may never be easy to allow for the Hawthorne effect (the tendency of any new approach to produce results just because it is new). Certainly American experience and experiment should be able to help us where they are different; we

might, to take some examples, do well to know more about multiple choice tests, about development in psychometric techniques leading to better use of the information which existing examinations can give, about the interior testing of English in American schools, about the possibilities of English teaching without external examinations for children of varying ability, about pupil motivation generally. Conversely, British points of difference might be of some interest for American thinking; our contribution might include many items in C.S.E., the assessment of continuous writing and (not quite the same) of personal writing and its importance, the testing of the spoken word, and, again, pupil motivation generally; there are also some very interesting developments in the examining of English in some of the newer universities. All this might be relevant for such tests as those set by the College Board, for the testing of English <u>within</u> the individual U.S. school, and perhaps for the teaching of English too. Neither of us is out to make converts, "And you should if you please refuse." But at a time when each of us is preoccupied with research and development, we cannot afford to be ignorant of what the other is doing; here is too large a field of study to ignore. One thing, however, is needful; it is not easy to take advantage of other people's thinking and practice without at least some general understanding of their institutions and the communities which these serve. Even allowing for many individual visits in both directions and for the excellent existing arrangements for teacher exchange, there seems in the past to have

been too little inter-traffic between the U.S. and the U.K.; perhaps we have taken such institutions as examinations-or the lack of them-too much for granted.

It is dangerous but always tempting to look into the future. In the United Kingdom there are in the air many ideas about new patterns of secondary organization, new kinds of team-work among leaders, and the replacement of the class of so many pupils by an altogether more elastic teaching unit. In the United States team-teaching is already well into the experimental stage. Programmed learning has implications for us both. Perhaps we shall all end up thinking less (in the United Kingdom) about external examinations or (in the United States) about credits, but more about courses in particular subjects or fields of study which the individual pupil or student will be able to work through at his own rate. A good deal of testing would be built into these courses, though it must never dominate them; the effect would be to lessen the importance of external tests (though these and still more the internal test externally assessed may still be of value in the later stages of the course), and at the same time to bring individual subjects closer together--for in the United Kingdom, at least, our examinations have heightened and hardened subject barriers. Such changes may come gradually, but will not be less important for that; they call for all the preliminary study we can give them.

To conclude, the central question asked in this paper is whether examinations, particularly in their external aspects, must inevitably be bad for the teaching of English, distorting what is measured and

hurting the student; is it possible to improve the external examination so that, within due limits, it may be compatible with good English teaching and perhaps even encourage this, or should we reform it altogether? No certain answer can be given; perhaps the external examination, as we have known it, should in all cases give way by degrees to a combination of internal and external which would start from the individual school or college; perhaps, as has been suggested in the last paragraph, we can anticipate more radical changes. It is clear that examinations, including external examinations, need to be studied as part of a much larger complex and have seldom been studied in this way. In the examining of English much is at stake; so much depends on values, attitudes, and motivating factors of which we are only just becoming aware, and it is perhaps here that some jointly planned studies might be most valuable. For English, like education, is concerned with the living word and the good life; the examination may have its place, but the examiner has much to learn.

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Study Group #9

Impact of External Examinations on English Teaching

ALAN PURVES

I have been asked to reply to this paper and I woke up at 6:30 this morning and turned to the Gideon Bible and found that the first external examination was in fact, Gideon's external examination by having all the soldiers go drink. No doubt that examination influenced military training for the next several years. The question of the impact of examination in the teaching curriculum I think can be answered simply; yes there is an impact. There is undoubtedly an impact and there always will be an impact. The second question which I will come to later is whether this impact is necessarily evil and whether it can in fact, be modified. But I thought first I should describe the school system in the United States, and I can only describe a part of it because I've entered the examination world only a year ago from the outside and I'm still outside and hope to remain there.

There are a great number of external examinations in the United States. I don't know how many thousands of tests are printed, but there are thousands. A great number of them are in what might be generally called the language arts, and a great number of them are multi-choice. In fact nearly all of them are multi-choice. Students, I am told are subjected to these examinations from kindergarten through graduate school. Most of the examinations are reading comprehension examinations or verbal intelligence examinations, and the one that I know most about, which is the College Entrance Examination Boards, Scholastic Aptitude Test, Verbal, as it is called. This examination is a multiple choice examination, with passages--generally rather dull passages--with multi-choice

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questions and reading comprehension, dealing with what is said, to a certain extent dealing with the assumptions underlying what is being said, and a series of questions of verbal analogies and a test of not synonyms, but antonyms. This test has been attacked and rightfully so, I think, for very often containing ambiguous questions because words are slippery things. But more particularly it's been attacked and again rightfully because it has brought into the English classroom--secondary school--a fair amount of cramming in vocabulary building. The extent of this cramming I'm not sure of, but I'm told terrible tales. But if there is anyone here who knows more about the American schools than I'm sure I do, they can tell me whether it is as wide spread as some of the critics say it is.

Comment: Well, apparently cram sessions are organized.

They are organized, but whether it's nation wide or not, I don't know. But at any rate as a former teacher of freshman English, I know that students arrive the first week of freshman English with a huge vocabulary, with a copy of Roget's Thesaurus, which they have memorized and no sense of what those words that they have learnt are to do, and to a great extent no sense what words really mean. They do know what their antonyms are--they are very good at that. They do emerge from this to a certain extent, in the sense that the longer the word the better it is. The second examination which deals with English particularly, is the English composition test, called the College Entrance Examination Boards. This is taken annually by something like a half a million candidates. It is an hour long test, which consists now of almost forty minutes of objective questions and a twenty minute essay.

The examination before 1940 was a three-hour examination. For reasons that I don't quite know, it was cut to one hour. It has remained at one hour, and it looks as if it will remain a one hour examination for a long time to come. The multi-choice questions deal with problems of syntax and style, I think, more than with problems of descriptive grammar. They do not touch such things as punctuation or spelling, but they do concern themselves with matters of asking the student to detect wordiness, the misused or mixed metaphor, to detect the inappropriateness of diction in a context, and such grammatical matters as the mixing of tenses and the lack of agreement between subject and verb and the dangling modifier of one sort or another. Approximately one fifth of the sentences given to the students are correct or are considered correct. Yet we have noticed that the students are so conditioned by the examination, that they generally fail.... The essay is a twenty minute essay. It is an essay on a topic. As to now the topics that I have been reading are the sad story of the old level examination. I tend to think that there is slightly less of this now, but not much. They are specifically designed to be questions which require no thought, so that the student immediately knows what he is doing and has as much time as possible in which to write. It is, in a sense, a self generating topic. He doesn't have to think or ponder the question. Although of course reading some of the answers, one notes that the student has not only pondered the question, but has pondered them in a very curious way. These papers are read during a three to four day period by a group of some hundred high school teachers and college teachers of English. Each paper is read three times and it is graded locally on a four point scale, there's no mid-point. A superior, above average, below average or inferior.

The three grades are then totaled, and this total grade is related to the objective part of the examination. The readers are asked to pay no attention to mechanics, and to pay primary attention to what is defined as promise as a writer. This is the attention that it pays, primarily to style--sentence style--to organization. They can't pay much attention to content because there isn't much, and we wouldn't expect there would be. Primarily the sentence style of conversation. A study has just been done not unlike the written study of the validity of this type of an examination. Students were asked to write five essays, both in and out of class on five different topics, presumably good topics. I don't know what they were. These five essays were then each read by five different graders, and these pooled ratings were the criterion against which the examination was measured. It was found that against this criterion that the addition of the twenty-minute essay increased the validity of the test by ten points. Brought it up to about point seven or eight. But also that two of the objective types--objective questions--one in which, the student was given a sentence with four words or phrases in that sentence underlined and then a fifth choice, which was no error to the student. The student was to look to see if there was an error to any one of those five points in the sentence: an error of grammar, diction, wordiness or to decide if there was no error at all. If this item combined with another type of question, which gave the student a paragraph with the missing sentence and a choice of four or five sentences, one or more than one which would have been stylistically appropriate, one of which, or perhaps more, was stylistically inappropriate, one of which made no sense in the context, one of which contained a grammatical

lapse. That these two types of questions together were almost as valid as the two types of questions with the essay, but the essay did add an important dimension. This test has had an impact, I'm sure, but I'm not really able to say what it is. Perhaps others will be able to say what it is. I think that to a certain extent it is crammed for, but certainly not to the extent which I gather, the old level is crammed for. I myself do not go through any cramming for this. I was crammed for French for two years, but not for this examination. I think perhaps one of the reasons it is not crammed for as much, is the difference between the way in which the score or the results of the examination are used--the examination, with the candidates given a grade on the scale, with reasons known only to statisticians, of from two hundred to eight hundred. This score is reported to the University, with the other scores of the other examination, and this is one of the factors that influences college admission. The question as to whether it is the main factor or not, and I having served on an admissions committee looked at nothing else, but it would depend very much, I think, on the college, just how it is used.

Comment: You are talking now about the English composition. The English composition and the essay theme too, I think. I think the College Board's scores are used in a variety of ways by a variety of institutions. I've heard that some admissions people withhold them from faculty admissions committees, so that they won't use them as the basis for a decision. There are two examinations pending at the college entrance level. One is a one hour examination in literature, the other is a one hour examination in the language or linguistics, I can't remember what term is filed for the English language.

Mr. _____ is on the English language committee, I think. Since I'm not connected with it in any way, if there is any question about it, he is better to answer them and not me.

The literature examination I've dealt with quite extensively. It was decided that because of the diversity of curriculum, there would be no questions on what one might call literary background, but there would only be questions on the ability of the candidate to read a new text, a text that was unfamiliar to him. Certain of these questions would be multi-choice questions. Other aspects of literature would be dealt with in any essay. We have had a great problem in that--I've been trying to say this frankly--the board wants us to have a one hour examination with a twenty minute essay, and we have insisted that you can't write a twenty minute essay without literature, without a literary topic and have it be in any sense an index of ability. We argued this, but it's like arguing with a mountain, I'm afraid. The objective questions deal with the candidate's perception of structure of ability to see verbal ambiguity, the ability to see the relationship between syntax or diction and meaning, but not to make, there are no questions on response, unfortunately. But how could one score them? I'll come to that later. And no questions on interpretation, again because of problems of scoring. It's admittedly only a partial examination. Whether this examination will ever be used to any great extent by the universities, I don't know. The examination in literature that is used by the university and does influence the curriculum, and was designed to influence the curriculum, is the Advance Placement Examination, which came into being about twelve years ago. It was an examination to be given to students who had already been accepted into college, to see if they were capable

of performing college level work in literature and to see if they could, by taking this examination, be exempt from freshman English, and go on to further study.

The examination is a three hour examination, originally all essay. Now it has one brief multi-choice section, again dealing with the analysis of a poem or a piece of prose. The essay questions, as they shape up to the most recent for me, were two essay questions on an unfamiliar text, asking the students to analyze and interpret the text and two questions on general literary topics. The first, or one of them, the question about _____, the second question about the interrelatedness of works of literature.

The Advance Placement Committee set this examination. It was to follow a course, a specific course in the secondary school, which was to be known as Advance Placement English, and the course was to be open only to the best students and was to follow no set books, but there were set certain expectations for the course. The student and the teacher were expected to deal with literature in much the same way as college teachers of English dealt with literature. They were not to treat the course as a course in "World Literature," but they were to deal with the nature of. . ., and with certain--it was up to the instructor which themes he wanted to deal with--but to deal with literature from the grammatic point of view. Originally the examination as a course dealt with writing, somewhat separate from literature, and was to be in addition to this advanced course in literature, an advanced course in writing. This was until one year the experiment was tried in which one of the questions was to be read twice, by the examiners, once for the candidate's skill as a writer

and once for his ability as a reader of literature. These two scores were reported and then were correlated with the question that was read primarily for its test of literary ability and one that was read simply as an essay. It was found that the two readings of the same essay correlated much more highly with each other than the reading of literature did with the literature question over the composition grade dealt with the composition question, so it seems that one could not, in fact, tell a reader to read either for literary competency or for writing competency but should read, I think the term is globally. Since then there has been not attempt to divorce in that examination "lang" from "lit."

I think that there has been a certain amount of guarded optimism, if I may use this phrase, about this course. It has had an effect. It has seemingly affected the grouping along certain lines the instruction in English in a number of schools. It had for a while the effect of creating an idea, or putting set books into the minds of the teacher, but examination of the books referred to by the students in the examination would seem to indicate that there are no, in fact, no books that predominate, except the ones, one might expect, King Lear, Hamlet. One curious thing, we gave a question this year on comedy and found that almost none of the students had read any comedy.

They had read no comedy. They didn't know how to handle it, it would seem by this, that it might be a bit heavy, but that is rather dubious. It was intended that this program die, that it be used in effect, to create a series of bellwether courses, which would then eventually become a part of the regular English curriculum and that the examination would in fact disappear.

Whether this will happen or not, I don't know. These are the examinations I know most about and except for one other, which is the graduate record examination in English, which is a three hour, all multi-choice examination on literary history, an analysis of literary works. I think it is a very valuable examination. Although I say that the Advance Placement found no distinction between "lang" and "lit," I'm not sure. I've argued elsewhere, that there may in fact be a distinction that could probably be explored. There are certain things in literature, in dealing with literary text that perhaps are objectively verifiable, as well as things that are rhetorically plausible, and if one wants to find out whether the student can distinguish those things which are objectively verifiable, perhaps a separate examination of this ability is called for. This is in effect the basis of the new college board's examination in literature. The impact of the examination here is, as it appears, Oh, I did want to say something, because I told Ben Mott that I was going to respectfully disagree with him, and he said that nobody had respectfully disagreed with him all week and that was that the writing of an essay on the examination is, let me say that I'm reading criticisms on the old level and hearing the discussion of last night. There is a great deal to be said against the set examination topic, no matter what the set examination topic is. I think this is one of the points that Ben was making, that any set topic, is necessarily going to be a bad topic. Am I quoting you more or less correctly? Mr. Allen did make a point yesterday in his paper about writing on demand, yet a great deal of the writing outside of the school is writing on demand and that one is an examination perhaps can do nothing more than find out if the student is basically capable of writing on demand, without attempting to assess whether

he is capable of or whether he has inner fire, or whether he has a highly complex organizational skill, or simply what was called last night, I believe, functional prose. These examinations--the American examinations--I think seek to measure that capacity or that ability in the student. It may be, I do not know, whether this type of prose that they demand does influence the high school teacher of English. From my experience, I would suggest less so than if written, but I do think it does, and I would think that what is called for, what Mr. Allen's paper calls for too, is a totally fresh look at the whole examination process and that what perhaps, the university in England, and I think what very definitely the college in the United States might want to know about the candidate in English, cannot be answered by a score, even on such a generous scale as from 200 to 800, but in fact a profile of the student, a profile of his writing ability. I'm not quite sure how this can be gathered, but I think this is the kind of examination that I myself feel should be most useful, certainly for the college to know about, to have a profile of the student's style. I can't think of any other term or strategy in dealing with literary works, a profile of, or even perhaps his response preferences, or perhaps even a profile of his taste, although I should hate, although myself I should not want that, but I think that such descriptive examination can be done. I think it can be, could be, extremely useful to the college; it would tell a great deal, much more about the candidate than would a flat score. I also think that such a descriptive examination, might in fact influence the curriculum, in a much more beneficial way than a straight examination does. I think from here on I better answer questions.